Building Evaluation Capacity: An Introductory Workshop

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Agenda

• Introductions
• Overview of Evaluation Capacity Building: Christina Smiraglia & Lynn Baum
• HMSC Evaluation Capacity Building Project: Polly Hubbard
• Brief Q&A
• Evaluation Capacity Building Reflection & Discussion Activities
• Wrap-Up
Introductions

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Audience
What is Evaluation Capacity Building?

“ECB involves the design and implementation of teaching and learning strategies to help individuals, groups, and organizations, learn about what constitutes effective, useful, and professional evaluation practice.

The ultimate goal of ECB is **sustainable evaluation practice**—where members continuously ask questions that matter, collect, analyze, and interpret data, and use evaluation findings for decision-making and action.”

from Preskill & Boyle, 2008
Evaluation Capacity Building Model

A Multidisciplinary Model of Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB)

From Preskill & Boyle, 2008
Evaluation Capacity Building: External Factors

• Accountability requirements
• Shifting expectations about evaluation
• Political changes
• Funding needs & opportunities
• Benchmarking
• New leadership
• Current and potential partnerships
Evaluation Capacity Building: Organizational Elements

• Leadership and culture
• Structures and systems
• Materials
• Resources
Evaluation Capacity Building: Individual Characteristics

- Beliefs and assumptions
- Motivations
- Skills
- Training or certification
- Experience
Potential Outcomes for Evaluation Capacity Building

- Embeds a culture of ongoing data-driven decision-making.
- Develops a practice of examining what is learned from created work.
- Creates opportunities for seeking funding.
- Ensures relevance to museum audiences.
- Creates a better understanding of needed support (internal or external).
Potential Outcomes for Evaluation Capacity Building, cont.

- Can help to avoid costly mistakes in the development stage of projects.
- Increases sharing of knowledge across the field by adding to repositories such as COVES (Collaboration for Ongoing Visitor Experience Studies) and InformalScience.org
Tips

• Create opportunities for staff to gain more insights about the work in other departments.
• Create internal visibility about the value of evaluation.
• Support ongoing professional development.
• Become knowledgeable about and embed best practices of human subject research ethics.
Tips, continued

• Devote the time/resources required to fully implement ongoing evaluations.
• Build evaluation into position descriptions and performance reviews.
• Seek out additional expertise, either internally or externally.
• Codify evaluation practices for shared understanding of the work.
ECB Project at HMSC 2016 - 17

Collection of Historical Scientific Instruments
Harvard Museum of Natural History
Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology
The Semitic Museum
Preparing for the Project

- Prioritized audience research in 2013 – 2018 Strategic Plan
- Created cross-departmental ‘Audience Research Committee’ in 2015
- Wrote and received grant to support the initiative (thank you IMLS!)
The Project Itself

• Led by Randi Korn & Associates

• Three workshops: Clarifying the Intended Impact; Developing Outcomes and Indicators; Planning for Evaluation

• Ongoing mentoring

• Creation of an Impact Statement, Impact Planning Framework & Evaluation Plans
Benefits

• Raised the profile of these activities and helped us address key strategic goals.
• Staff appreciated working across departments to develop impact statement and priorities.
• Staff felt positive that evaluation data would be shared & used to inform decisions.
• Staff reported being more aware of evaluation and why it was important.
• Staff had time to participate in other opportunities e.g., IRB training.
Lessons Learned

• Including all staff proved challenging
  – Some confusion on how evaluation would be integrated into work roles;
  – Important to tailor workshops for staff in different departments;
  – Finding times to meet.

• More time was needed for active learning opportunities to develop evaluation skills.

• Some staff became less interested in evaluation perhaps as a result of a deeper understanding of what was involved.
A Year Later

• New evaluation projects were started by several departments.
• Instituted a culture of ‘reflective practice’.
• Organized sessions to improve staff skills in data analysis.
• More staff seeking out PD in evaluation.
• New volunteer role to assist with evaluation.
• And, of course, more attention to our audiences!
Clarifying Questions?
Individual Reflections

Take some time to:

• Review the checklist handout individually, reflecting on your own organization or one you work with.

• Consider strengths you & the organization can build on.

• Consider areas of need and how you & the organization might address them.

You may wish to take notes as you’re reflecting.
Small Group Discussions

- Everyone at the table should briefly introduce themselves, including the organization you’re with.
- Think about who you might want to discuss your reflections with. You might consider talking to folks in similar organizations, for example.
- **Discuss your reflections** with a few other people:
  - What do you think are your organization’s evaluation strengths & weaknesses?
  - Have you tried building in evaluation as a part of regular organization practice? How did it go?
  - Do others’ reflections spark any new thoughts about your own work/organization?
- **Write down highlights** as you discuss, so you can report out
What are some key take-aways and remaining questions?
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